

# Player Guide: A Beginner's Guide to Playing Poker

[star star moon](#) The Side Pot SagePosts: 261Registered User Gabby Enthusiast  
January 2010 edited December 2015 in [Guides & Poker Strategy](#)

## **So I understand about winning hands, how does this game work?**

Get some chips and find a table, I'd start out on the \$1-\$2 blind tables to begin with., you get around 1000 free chips every day so you will get a good number of hands with those chips at that level.

## **Blinds!!! What is this game going to do to me?**

Don't panic! Nobody is going to be going blind. Texas Hold'em is a game about gambling. You get up to 9 people at a table with a certain amount of chips to gamble. It would be no fun at all if players could just sit there hand after hand and not put any chips in the pot until they got good hole cards. So we have things called blinds, these are mandatory bets that have to be paid in to play a hand, the player to the immediate left of the dealer is the Small Blind (SB), the player to his left is the Big Blind (BB).

Each table has a certain blind value attached to it, the SB is always exactly half the BB.

After each hand is won the Big Blind moves one player to the left and drags the Small Blind and dealer button one place left with it. Note that this means for every go (orbit) round a table of 9 players you will have to pay a minimum of 1.5BB

## **The hand has started, I'm not in a blind position, but I've put in a BB bet. is this a bug?**

No, in an attempt to stop ungamesmanly behaviour Zynga implemented a rule whereby you MUST post a BB bet whenever you sit down at the table, this was to stop people standing up before becoming the big blind and sitting back down in a seat where they would not have to pay it.

## **I have my hole cards what now?**

Look at your hole cards, are they any good? To begin with it is probably better to stick to premium cards,

## **What are premium cards?**

High pocket pairs ( anything above a pair of 10s) or two face cards (J, Q, K, A) especially if they are of the same suit. Premium cards are considered as playable until you learn from experience when to fold them  
Super premium cards are AA KK and AK suited and should almost always be played

## **I've got premium cards. Lets get this thing going.**

This is the pre-flop betting stage. The person directly to the left of the BB (Under the Gun) acts first. they have to decide, based on their hole cards, whether to fold their hand(no cost) call the BB (costs the BB) or make a bet, (usually a multiple of the BB).

After doing this, play (action) moves to the player to his left who can either fold, call the current value of the bet or raise. This continues clockwise, when it gets to your turn you have to decide whether your hole cards are worth playing or not. Lets be honest here, as a new player you are going to lose more than you win and rely on a lot of luck until you build up some experience. If you have premium cards and nobody else at the table has made a very high raise you should call any raises. If you have super premium cards then you should raise. if you don't have premium or super premium cards...fold.

The pre-flop stage ends when all players have either folded or have put equal amounts into the pot. At which time all the bets are collected into the centre of the table and the flop is dealt.

### **The Flop.**

Three cards will be dealt face up on the table, compare these with the cards in your hand. Have you hit anything?

### **Hit anything! Blinds! Under the Gun! Are you sure this isn't a bloodsport?**

LOL. No. Hitting something on the flop means that your hole cards have matched up with the three cards on the table. For instance if you have a pair of Jacks in your hand and a J or two have come down on the table you have hit trips or quads. If you had JA in the hole and K Q 10 come down then you have hit an Ace high straight. If you had Two hearts in the hole and three hearts come down then you have hit a flush. If you have Q J in your hand and a Q and a J come down then you have hit two pair.

### **The flop came down but I haven't hit anything should I fold?**

Maybe. There are still another 2 cards to come remember. Look at your five cards, do you have 4 cards that could make a straight if the right fifth card comes down? Have cards come down that could make a flush if another of the same comes out? Do you have two higher cards in your hole than have come down on the flop? Have you got a pocket pair which is higher than the three cards on the table?

### **The flop came down and I've hit something...what should I do?**

That depends.

Look at the list of hand rankings from earlier in this guide, where on that list is your current hand? The lower down the list the better the hand you have and the more you should consider raising. The higher up the list the weaker the hand and the more you should consider simply checking and seeing what other players do. As you play more hands and gain in confidence and experience you can consider bluffing, semi-bluffing, trapping and slow playing (topics for a further guide I think) for now I would say if you have a straight or higher, raise. if you have lower simply call.

### **I think I should raise...how much should I raise by?**

That is the million dollar question and one which even the most experienced players ask themselves in every hand.

In general after the flop you should raise by multiples of the pot, either half pot or full pot or twice the pot, depending on how strong your hand is.

But you should also look at what is on the table and see whether what you have in your hand could be beaten, for instance if you have trips and there are three hearts on the table, then you could be up against a flush. if three cards of different suits are there but they are linked in a way that someone could have a straight i.e. if 2 3 4 or 3 5 6 are on the board. If you have trips after the flop you might want to raise by a lot to try and scare off players from chasing a straight, or you might want to raise by a little to try and get more chips in the pot from more players but run the risk of losing the hand. It is called gambling for a reason. When you have a thousand hands under your belt you get a feel for the cards and the hand strength and will make better decisions. for now stick to calling or raising based on the strength of what you have.

### **Someone else has raised, what do I do?**

How much have they raised by? if it is just by a couple of blinds and you have top pair or better then you should call it. if it is more than a couple of blinds and you have trips or better then call it. if it is more than a pot and you have a flush or better you should call it. if you don't have those then you should fold. if you have a full house or better in any of those circumstances then you should raise over the top of them.

### What happens when I fold?

you sit out the rest of the hand you lose all the chips you have put into the pot and you wait until the next hand begins, it should take no more than a couple of minutes.

### OK, I have called and nobody else has raised. what happens now?

Now the turn card is dealt and the betting begins again. look again at what you have and what is on the table and consider what other cards might be out there to make a better hand than you have at the moment and raise , call or fold accordingly.

After this the river comes down, you now have all 7 cards and should know what hand you have, there is another round of betting and after that the player left in with the best hand wins.

### What if I raise and all the other players fold?

Then you win the pot, well done.

### I won the hand. What now?

Well done, you win all the chips in the pot and the next hand is dealt and the process begins all over again

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#### Can you give me some extra details on how card rankings and winning works

Sure. A bit more involved this time. I'm going to assume you've played a hundred or more hands and are getting to grips with raising, calling and folding

#### So, to recap the strength of hands

Royal flush beats straight flush  
Straight flush beats Four of a kind  
Four of a kind beats Full house  
Full house beats Flush  
Flush beats Straight  
Straight beats Trips  
Trips beats 2 Pair  
2 Pair beats Pair  
Pair beats High Card

By now you will have encountered a few times where two or more players have the same strength hand so I will go into more detail about the winning order within each group.

#### High Card:

If no players left in the hand at the end have hit anything then the winner will be the player with the highest card. i.e. if player 1 has K 2 and player 2 has Q J then player 1 would win as a king beats a Queen.  
The pot can be split if both players have the same hole cards or if the cards in the community are higher than both players hole cards.

### **Pair:**

If two, or more, players have a pair then the player with the highest pair wins the hand. i.e. if Player 1 has a Pair of 6 and Player 2 has a pair of 8 then player 2 would win.  
if both players have the same pair then the hand would be won by the player that has the higher kicker.

### **What is a kicker?**

A kicker is a way of differentiating otherwise equal hands, it comes into play when the highest strength hand is a pair, 2 pair, trips, quads and after a fashion in flushes. Kickers do not come into play with straights, full houses or straight flushes.

The kickers are the highest cards not taking part in the strength of the hand.

You know that Texas Hold'em is a 5 card from 7 game. Every hand is made up of 5 cards. SO in quads and 2 pair hands there is 1 kicker, in trips there are up to 2 kickers in pairs there are up to 3 kickers. usually only the first kicker will be needed.

for instance if

player 1 has A 10 in their hand

player 2 has A J in their hand

and the community is A 3 4 7 9 then the actual hand that each player holds is

Player 1 A A 10 9 7

Player 2 A A J 9 7

both players have a pair of Aces but player 2 has the higher kicker with a J

If the community had been A 3 4 7 K then both players would have had a pair of Aces with a King kicker but the J in player 2's hand would have won the hand.

so for example

AA 5 4 3 beats KK Q J A

33 K 2 A beats 33 Q J 10

55 K 6 7 beats 55 K 3 2

AA K J 9 beats AA K J 4

### **2 Pair:**

If two players have two pair the winner is the one with the highest pair, if they both have the same high pair the one with the highest second pair wins, if they both have the same two pair then the highest player with the highest kicker wins the hand. if they have exactly the same 5 cards then the pot is split.

i.e.

AA334 beats KKQQJ

AA772 beats AA22Q

AAKK6 beats AAKK2

### **Trips:**

If two players have three of a kind then the winner is the one with the highest three of a kind, If they have the same three of a kind it goes to the player with the highest kicker, If they have the same highest Kicker then the one with the highest second Kicker wins, if they have the same highest two cards then the pot is split

i.e.

99956 beats 333KA

444K6 beats 444QJ

444K9 beats 444K7

### **Straight**

If two people have a straight the winner is the one with the highest straight, if they have the same highest card in the straight then the pot is split

i.e.

10JQKA beats A2345

### **Flush:**

If two people have a flush then the one with the highest card in the flush wins, if they both have the same highest card it goes to the one with the highest second card in the flush, if they have the same second highest card, it goes to the player with the highest third card, and so on till a split pot if the five highest cards in the flush are in the community when it becomes a split pot

i.e.

A6432 hearts beats KQ432 hearts

AK945 spades beats AQ945 spades

A K 10 9 6 beats A K 8 9 6

and so on

### **Full House:**

If two players have full houses it goes to the player with the highest trips, if they have the same trips it goes to the player with the highest two of a kind, if the players have the same trips and pair then it is a split pot

66655 beats 55566

666AA beats 666KK

### **Quads:**

If two players have quads, the pot goes to the one with the highest quads, if they have the same quads, then it goes to the player with the highest kicker, if they both have the same highest card not involved in the quad then the pot is split.

66662 beats 44446

3333A beats 3333K

### **Straight Flush:**

If two players have a straight flush then it is won by the player with the highest card in the straight it would only be a split pot if the straight flush was in the community cards.

98765 hearts beats 87654 hearts.

### **Royal Flush**

If you are lucky enough to get a royal flush then you can't be beaten. If the Royal Flush is in the community then the pot will be split between all players left in the hand

Next time....Side Pots...wish me luck

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\*\*\*looks to the distance...sees Kenboi raising a mob bent on tarring and feathering\*\*\*

\*\* builds barricade\*\*

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[star star moon](#) wrote: [»](#)

Please comments suggestions criticism.

\*\*\*looks to the distance...sees Kenboi raising a mob bent on tarring and feathering\*\*\*

\*\* builds barricade\*\*

Yep !!!! Warms up the tar bucket and has about a dozen chickens de-feathered already :mad:

Just kidding , very well done. :cool:

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- [Bella Sera](#) Super Moderator Posts: **46**Registered User Building Expert

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Great post. Thanks, Star! If I could give you rep, I would, instead you'll just have to take a sticky. 😊

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- [Kenboi](#) The Chosen One Posts: **98**Registered User Chocolatier

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[star star moon](#) wrote: [»](#)

Please comments suggestions criticism.

\*\*\*looks to the distance...sees Kenboi raising a mob bent on tarring and feathering\*\*\*

\*\* builds barricade\*\*

OK...fairly sure I've already commented on this, Star. Probably fell off when it was moved and stickied. :)I wouldn't say Auntie Deb was clumsy, but last time she called to horse-whip me for an infraction, she slightly misjudged her landing and took out the hen-coop in a whirling, shrieking somersault of splintered wood, whirring chickens and about a gallon and a half of chicken muck...hadn't got round to changing the straw, yet, that morning...

She wasn't best pleased, sitting there with her broken broomstick...and the catapulted eggs, responding to gravity's call, didn't help improve her dishevelled appearance when they landed. It's been 3 months and my best layer is still

quivering and non-productive. Just sits there staring at the sky with a look of frozen horror on its little face.

Oh, yes...that's what I said. Good job, mate and more power to your elbow. 😊

\*Note: All my other descriptive words for your little gem of a guide are apparently against the TOS of this site...\*  
I'll just go back to handing out the pitchforks and burning torches, now....

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very informative guide, wish i had one when i first started up, learnt by trial and error:o

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### **Pots, a beginners guide.**

By now you've got a few hundred hands under your belt and are quite familiar with the hand strengths and are getting to grips with the kicker concept. But you have probably encountered split pots and side pots and wondered how the heck that player with two pair walked off with part of the pot when you clearly had a straight or a flush.

The answer to that is side pots and it can be quite confusing. It is responsible for the vast majority of posts on the forum regarding payouts to the 'wrong hand'

### **SO tell me about split pots.**

These are straight forward enough.

If 2 or more players share EXACTLY the same hand then whatever is in the pot gets split equally between them. SO if the pot is 3000 chips and 3 players are left in after the river all with 2 pair Q and J with an A kicker, then each of the wins 1000 chips.

In real life, any chips left over that cant be equally divided between the players get automatically given to the player to the right of the dealer. but in Zynga you can end up with fractions of chips.

for instance if player1 is the small blind, player 2 is the dealer and player 3 is in another position and a pot of 5000 chips is split between them, then in Zynga all players would get 1666.66 chips, In real life players 2 and 3 would get 1666 chips and player 1 would get 1668.

### **Side pots.**

This is more complicated but really quite elementary when you think about it.

When you bet into the pot other players who want to play have to cover your bet, or you have to cover their bets, before you can move on to the next card being dealt. Often, one or more players will not have enough chips in front of them to cover the current bet. Perhaps someone will go all in, but other players who are in the hand want to raise by a higher amount.

### **for instance**

Player1 has 1000 chips  
PLayer2 has 1500 chips  
player 3 has 250 chips

player 4 has 3000 chips

### **How the hand goes**

player1 (P1) has got trips with the middle card on the flop so wants to raise by 500 chips. Player 2 has 2 pair and wants to simply call, the pot is now 1000 chips.

P3 however has got a full house but cannot cover the 500 chip bet as they only have 250 chips. what they do is go all in with 250 chips.

This creates two pots, a main pot which any player can win which is capped at the value of 250 chips from each player in the hand so this pot currently has 750 chips in it. there is now a side pot with 500 chips in it which can only be won by P1 or P2. P3 takes no further part in the betting in this hand.

Player 4 has a straight draw and flat calls the 500 bet. so 250 chips from that goes into the main pot to cover P3's all in and 250 goes into the side pot to cover the 500 chip bet from P1.

### **at the end of this round of betting we have**

P1 with 500 chips

P2 with 1000

P3 with 0 (as they went all-in)

P4 with 2500

and a main pot of 1000 chips and a side pot of 750 chips

### **after the turn card**

P1 still has their middle trips but has a possible flush draw so raises all in themselves a 500 chip raise

P2 still has their top 2 pair so calls the 500 chip raise

P4 has hit their straight and raises all in

when P4 tries to raise they will find that even though they have 2500 chips in front of them they can only raise to 1000 chips as that is the highest that any other player in the hand has left.

P2 decides that 2 pair is not going to win this hand and so folds

### **What has happened to the pots and blinds?**

so, from before we have a main pot of 1000 chips that any of players 1,2,3 or 4 could win

we also had a side pot of 750 chips that only P1 P2 or P4 could win.

P1 bet 500 chips, (all of this goes in the side pot as it is over and above everything that P3 had)

P2 called, putting another 500 chips in the side pot.

P4 raised to 1000, the first 500 of this goes in the side pot, but P1 cannot cover this bet so the final 500 goes into a second side pot which only P2 and P4 could win.

P2 folded.

We now have a main pot of 1000 chips (which P1,P3 and P4 can win)

a first side pot with 2250 chips in (which P1 and P4 can win)

and a second side pot which only P4 has put into and only they can win.

All players in the hand are either all in or have covered the all in bets so we get the river

### **River**

the river card gives

Player 1 a flush

Player 2 is out

P3 has a full house

P4 has a straight

### **winnings distributed**

so we start to dish out the pots. The side pots are always given out first in order from last to first, then the main pot



is given out.

In this case the second side pot of 500 chips can only be won by P4 with their straight

the first side pot can be won by P4 or P1, P1 has a flush so wins the 2250 chips

the main pot can be won by P1,P3 or P4, P3 has the full house and wins the 1000 chips.

You can have as many side pots as there are players in a hand and you do not necessarily have to have the best hand at a table to win a side pot.

This is useful to remember if there are a lot of players at the table with short stacks of chips